

Sustainable Fisheries Program

MISSION:

Rebuild & maintain sustainable fisheries

- I. Work with Council to develop Fishery Management Plans (FMPs)**
- II. Review draft FMPs; coordinate review with NMFS HQ & GC**
- III. Prepare FMP package for approval by Sec. of Commerce and publication in *Federal Register***
- IV. Implement FMP regulations approved by Sec. of Commerce**

Sustainable Fisheries Division

Other Duties

- **Consult with protected resources program on proposed actions that may affect species listed under the Endangered Species Act.**
- **Conduct annual protected species workshop for longline vessel captains and owners.**
- **Administer NOAA cooperative agreements for WPacFIN & Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act grants for HI, AS, Gu, CNMI.**
- **Prepare draft annual reports to Congress on Council membership and status of stocks managed under Council's FMPs.**
- **Serve as NMFS' lead on implementing seabird National Plan of Action in western Pacific region.**
- **Review and advise NMFS leadership on fishery management policy.**
- **Respond to inquiries from fishermen and public on W. Pacific federal fisheries.**

FEDERAL REGISTER

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act)

956	Federal Register / Vol. 67, No. 5 / Tuesday, January 8, 2002 / Rules and Regulations	
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE	Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21666, Juneau, AK, 99802. Attn: Lori Gravel, or delivered to room 401 of the Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet. Copies of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures in the Federal groundfish fisheries off Alaska (SEIS), including the 2001 biological opinion, and the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Total Allowable Catch for the Year 2002 Alaska Groundfish Fisheries may be obtained from the same address. The SEIS and EA are also available on the NMFS Alaska Region homepage at http://www.fakr.noaa.gov . Send comments on collection-of-information requirements to the same address and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, DC 20503 (Attn: NOAA Desk Officer).	
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	including information on the development of protection measures for 2002. Part II describes the harvest specifications for the 2002 groundfish fisheries of the BSAI and GOA. These specifications are consistent with the 2002 Steller sea lion protection measures.	
50 CFR Part 679	Part I. Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures	
[Docket No. 011218304-1304-01; I.D. 121701A]	Steller Sea Lion Endangered Species Status	
RIN 0648-AP69	In 1990, NMFS designated the Steller sea lion as a threatened species under the ESA. The designation followed severe declines throughout much of the GOA and Aleutian Islands region. In 1993, NMFS designated critical habitat for the species to include (among other areas) the marine areas within 20 nautical miles (nm) of major rookeries and haulouts of the species west of 144° W longitude (long.). In 1997, NMFS recognized two separate populations and reclassified the western population (west of 144° W long.) as endangered.	
Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures for the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska; Final 2002 Harvest Specifications and Associated Management Measures for the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska	NMFS first began collecting information on the abundance of Steller sea lions during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the first counts based on reliable data were not available until the late 1970s; these counts reported approximately 109,800 animals. During the 1980s, a precipitous decline of Steller sea lions was observed. By 1996, the population had declined by 80 percent from the late 1970s. Counts of adult and juvenile Steller sea lions have continued to decline over the last decade, but at a much lower rate.	
AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.	Based on the best available scientific information, NMFS attributes the continued decline to multiple factors. Considerable evidence indicates that the lack of available prey is a substantial factor. Diet studies confirm that Steller sea lions depend on pollock, Pacific cod, and Alaska mackerel as major prey resources, and that they may be particularly sensitive to reduced availability of prey during the winter. The occurrence of pollock, Pacific cod, and Alaska mackerel in the diet of sea lions may have increased since the 1970s due to shifts in the Bering Sea ecosystem related to atmospheric and oceanographic changes. More information on the environmental changes and potential effects on Steller sea lions is detailed in section 4.4.1 of the October 19, 2001, Biological Opinion on the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries and the effects on Steller sea lions (see ADDRESSES).	
ACTION: Emergency interim rule; request for comments.	Background	
SUMMARY: NMFS issues an emergency interim rule to implement Steller sea lion protection measures to avoid the likelihood that the groundfish fisheries off Alaska will jeopardize the continued existence of the western population of Steller sea lions or adversely modify their critical habitat. These management measures will disperse fishing effort over time and area to provide protection from potential competition for important Steller sea lion prey species in waters adjacent to rookeries and important haulouts. This action also announces final 2002 harvest specifications and associated management measures for the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI) and the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The intended effect of this emergency interim rule is to protect the endangered western population of Steller sea lions, as required under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the BSAI and the GOA in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).	NMFS manages the groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Alaska under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Groundfish of the BSAI and the FMP for Groundfish of the GOA. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared the FMPs under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq. Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMPs appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. NMFS also has management responsibility for certain threatened and endangered species, including Steller sea lions, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq., and the authority to promulgate regulations to enforce provisions of the ESA to protect such species.	
DATES: Effective January 1, 2002, except for the addition of § 679.76(a)(18), the suspension of § 679.7(c)(3), and the addition of § 679.28(f)(3)(viii) which will be effective 1200 hours A.L.T. on June 10, 2002, through July 9, 2002, and § 679.7(b), § 679.50(c)(4)(v) and (c)(6) which will be effective January 15, 2002, through July 8, 2002. Comments must be received by February 7, 2002.	Introduction	
ADDRESSES: Comments may be sent to Sue Salvendy, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries	The preamble to this emergency rule contains two parts. Part I explains the background surrounding actions taken to protect the endangered western population of Steller sea lions,	

- NMFS is the 4th largest producer of regulations behind EPA, FAA, and FCC, in terms of number of rules/notices published in the *Federal Register*.
- Since 1983, 169 notices published on Western Pacific fisheries.

Number of W. Pacific FMP Federal Register Notices 1983 to Present (n=169)

